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Letter Shows U.S. May Have Held Mengele

Arrest, Release In Vienna Cited

Associated Press

NEW YORK, Jan. 23—A newly obtained document indicates that U.S. intelligence officers may have arrested, questioned and released Nazi war criminal Dr. Josef Mengele in Vienna in 1947, the Simon Wiesenthal Center said today.

The letter was declassified and obtained several months ago under the Freedom of Information Act by the Los Angeles-based Wiesenthal center, which studies the Holocaust.

A second document indicates that Mengele, who ran the Auschwitz prisoner camp where an estimated 4 million Jews and other prisoners were killed, may have applied for a Canadian visa in 1962.

The West German government has had an arrest warrant pending since 1959 for Mengele. Mengele, who would be 73 if he were alive, reportedly was last seen in Paraguay in the 1970s.

The first document is an April 26, 1947, letter written by former Army intelligence officer Ben J.M. Gorby to the commanding officer of the 430th Counter-Intelligence Corps unit in Vienna.

Gorby wrote that his office had information from an informer that Mengele had been arrested in Vienna, said Rabbi Marvin Hier, dean of the Wiesenthal center, at a news conference in New York.

Hier, however, said the center could not find any other documents to back up Gorby's statement.

Attempts to locate and interview Gorby have proved futile, Hier said, adding that the U.S. government has provided no assistance.

The second document was the American response to a Canadian inquiry about a man named Joseph Menke who had applied for a Canadian visa from Buenos Aires.

Maj. Buford F. MacCharen Jr., an Army intelligence officer in Europe, responded to G. Mel Bailey, a Canadian visa control officer in Cologne, West Germany, in June 1962 and included an Army intelligence report.

Hier said the American response was that "in their opinion Joseph Menke was the infamous Dr. Josef Mengele." Although they talked with Bailey at his home in Ottawa, the group said it was not able to learn whether a Joseph Menke was denied or issued the visa.

Informed of the U.S.-Canadian correspondence, Canadian Prime Minister Brian Mulroney sent the center a letter saying that he has begun "a vigorous investigation" into the matter, Hier said.

Hier chided the U.S. government for not following Canada's action.

Hier said the center has been denied access to four classified documents because the Army said their release would jeopardize national security.

The center plans to sue the government for access, he said.

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